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ABSTRACT

Project "Open Horizons," in Buffalo and Niagara Falls, New York, was born out of a recognition that minority adolescents in disadvantaged communities face serious social and personal problems in the area of career development. The originators of the project were seeking an effective methodology for exposing disadvantaged youth to a "success ideology" and for literally getting them moving in the right direction. To this end, Open Horizons employs the following three components, delivered in four two-and-a-half-hour sessions: (1) vocational biographies of role models--slide tape presentations of six prominent minority citizens in the surrounding area; (2) a vocational exploration manual--designed to reinforce the role models' message and to help participants work out action plans appropriate for themselves; and (3) rap and process sessions--group sessions during which participants watch the slide presentations, meet role models, do exercises from the manual, and discuss what they are learning and how it applies to themselves. Evaluation studies of the project indicate that it has met two of its major goals, first, that of improving participants' career information seeking behavior (particularly in the case of Blacks), and second, that of gaining from participants overwhelmingly positive reactions to the project's achievement-oriented ideology. (KH)

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Open Horizons

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SUMMARY OF

PROJECT OPEN HORIZONS

Phase I: Implementation and Data Analysis

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Introduction

Project "Open Horizons" was born out of a recognition that minority adolescents in disadvantaged communities face serious social and personal problems in the area of career development and that more often than not, these youth end up as unfortunate statistics in some aspect of youth pathology. For example, consider the fact that minority adolescents have the highest unemployment rate in the country. For these young adults, there are hardly any jobs available from which they can learn good work habits and the link between working, satisfying one's own needs in a socially acceptable way, and the confidence, self-worth, and competence that one feels as a result.

Consider further that the communities from which these young people yield are usually devoid of traditionally successful individuals who can act as appropriate role-models. At the same time, these communities are often replete with their own repertoire of role-models based on the street way of life. While it is true that people must do what they feel they must to survive, much of what they are forced by circumstance to do is ultimately self-destructive. Consequently, many youth learn that the price of survival can also be the path to destruction.

In addition, there are two institutions that have a major influence on the lives of young people - namely, the home and the school - and these institutions as well are falling short in their career development responsibilities. With the population in question, the home is often a multi-problem home whose emphasis is on daily survival with little time and

attention being given over to the nurturance of career aspirations in the children. Not that success is not important, rather it is not an issue with which these homes have the time or resources to deal.

The schools, on the other hand, are diminished in their career development effectiveness because of their own organizational problems. These include but are not limited to severe budget cutbacks, shrinking student populations and empty schools, burned out staff, and paramount among these, staffs with little or no training and resources for addressing minority career development issues.

In this context, faced with the acting-out of troubled minority youth, schools almost uniformly adopt a policing posture. Because of this dynamic, the schools feel thrwarted in their efforts to educate while the students react with greater and greater hostility and rebellion toward the imposition of greater and greater amounts of authority. Over the years, both the schools and the students lose sight of the goals of that joint enterprise which is to prepare the student to face the future with skills and abilities that will enable the student to assume a productive role in life.

At every juncture, these youth lose out on chances to actualize the best in themselves. When we see them, the level of their vocational maturity, sense of control, and school achievement - all the necessary elements for later career success are already seriously lacking. Instead of purposive, disciplined, achievement-oriented young people, we see youth who are angry and acting out. Others are mired in a certain hopelessness with no sense of direction and no sense of the need to establish one. Still others are cynical and hard-core, having found their own solutions in premature sexuality, drug use and abuse of all varieties, truancy, school failure, and juvenile delinquency. "So what?" they say if they are paying for these methods of coping with rampant venereal disease, teenage pregnancy, drug dependencies, police hassles, and incarcerations. Theirs is such a recalcitrant brand of

social alienation because it is created and supported by so many elements of reality.

Aware of these problems, the originators of "Open Horizons" were seeking an effective methodology for exposing disadvantaged youth to a "success ideology" and to literally get them moving in the right direction. After all, many disadvantaged minorities manage to cope successfully with all the obstacles created by poverty, ethnicity, or both. These individuals make it out of the maze, live meaningful and productive lives, and still reach back and around to help others. What these people seem to have in common are their dedication to achievement and self-improvement, their willingness to struggle, the maturity of their work attitudes and the sense of control over themselves and their lives that they were able to develop and maintain. "Open Horizons" was designed to teach the lessons presented by people like this to minority youth who still have to find their own personal solutions. We realized that there were many negative factors to be addressed, but we still felt that a creative way could be found to begin to intervene in this situation.

Description of the Project

At this stage in its development, "Open Horizons" consists of three components: (1) the vocational biographies; (2) the vocational exploration manual; and (3) the "rap" and process sessions. For convenience, each component is more fully described in separate sections below.

THE VOCATIONAL BIOGRAPHIES: The vocational biographies are short stories about the lives and careers of six prominent minority citizens in the Buffalo metropolitan area. In selecting these role-models, the following criteria were applied - the degree of upward mobility demonstrated in their lives, evidence of a moral or religious family upbringing, visible economic success, significant community involvement and the role-model's availability for "rap" sessions. Presented in a portable slide and tape format, the vocational biographies depict a Black woman, a Puerto-Rican woman, two Black men, one Puerto-Rican male, and one disabled white man. The occupations depicted include a deputy director for operations in a community mental health center, an affirmative action officer, a county commissioner for youth services, a heart physician, an electrician, and a small business owner,

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respectively.

Using successful role-models with whom target youth can identify in a multi-media format is a very powerful technique. Each presentation goes straight to the heart of career development matters and after the very first one, participants are in a state of readiness to consider the issues.

THE VOCATIONAL EXPLORATION MANUAL: To capitalize on this readiness and to encourage youth to translate what they have seen and heard to themselves, a 42-page vocational exploration manual entitled "Where You're Going and How To Get There" was developed. This manual, which features the "Open Horizons" themes of being someone in life with goals and a vehicle in the form of a pleasing career to reach them, also contains numerous insight-building exercises that the student can work through either alone or as part of a group exercise. For example, the exercises help youth to explore: (1) their dreams for the future; (2) the obstacles which they must overcome in order to reach these dreams; and (3) the centrality of values, interests, and abilities in decision-making regarding careers. Over 170 occupations from many different areas and levels of society are panoramically reviewed in the manual, after which the participant is helped to create an action plan that he or she feels is appropriate.

THE "RAP" AND PROCESS SESSIONS: Reinforcement of the lessons to be learned from the slide tape presentations and the manual is accomplished through the ample use of "rap" and process sessions. The "rap" sessions are special group process sessions during which a particular role-model is featured both in the slide presentation and in person. Students see and hear the person's story, listen while the person delivers a little in vivo talk, and then engage in dialogue about the many aspects of career development for the minority and/or disadvantaged individual. The process sessions, on the other hand, are led by the group leaders on a regular basis in conjunction with: (1) the presentation of the other vocational biographies; (2) selected exercises from the vocational exploration manual; and (3) relevant issues that the youth raise themselves.

The three components of Project "Open Horizons" are delivered in four sessions of two and one-half hours' duration. The sessions are arranged as follows: The first sessions is spent introducing the group leaders and the participants to each other, pre-testing, presenting the goals and methods of the project, and presenting and processing the first slide-tape presentation. The second session is spent viewing and processing one slide-tape presentation, viewing a second presentation and having a "rap" session with the role-model,

introducing the manual, and conducting and processing the first exercises contained within it. Session three involves processing additional exercises in the manual, viewing and processing one last slide-tape presentation, creating the action plan, and immediate post-testing. Session four involves reviewing the status of the action plans, giving final assistance and encouragement, and post follow-up testing. Sessions one, two and three are scheduled back-to-back one week apart. Session four is conducted thirty days after session three.

Goals of Project "Open Horizons"

There are six goals associated with Project "Open Horizons". More specifically, they are:

- TO PLOT A VIABLE NEW DIRECTION IN ADDRESSING THE DELINQUENCY AND DEFERRED CAREER MATURATION OF MINORITY AND/OR DISADVANTAGED YOUTH BY DEVELOPING SLIDE-TAPE BIOGRAPHIES OF POSITIVE ROLE-MODELS AND A FULL WORKSHOP PACKAGE FOR THEIR DELIVERY.

- TO EXPOSE PROJECT PARTICIPANTS TO AN ACHIEVEMENT-ORIENTED IDEOLOGY.

- TO CREATE A SENSE OF DIRECTION AND ACTION IN PROJECT PARTICIPANTS. THE ACTION SOUGHT IS INCREASED CAREER INFORMATION-SEEKING AND PLANNING BY A GREATER NUMBER OF PARTICIPANTS ON FOLLOW-UP COMPARED TO PRE-TEST LEVELS OF ACTIVITY.

- TO PROVIDE PROJECT PARTICIPANTS WITH INFORMATION ABOUT CAREERS AND ABOUT WHERE MORE INFORMATION CAN BE FOUND.

- TO EVALUATE THE PROJECT FROM THE POINT OF VIEW OF THE PARTICIPANTS.

- TO BUILD A CURRENT DATA BASE ON SEVERAL IMPORTANT THEORETICAL ISSUES IN THE FIELD OF CAREER DEVELOPMENT IN MINORITIES AND THE DISADVANTAGED.

Goal one addresses the development of the "Open Horizons" project at a time when funding cut-backs are threatening extant programming and stifling innovation in the fields of both delinquency prevention and career development. Goals two through four pertain to the direct and measurable benefits that

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project participants receive with exposure to "Open Horizons". Goals five and six refer to the extensive research and evaluation study conducted in conjunction with this project.

Implementation of Project "Open Horizons"

Table 1 describes the sites, location, and clusters of participants completing Project "Open Horizons" during Phase I of its implementation.

- Insert Table 1 -

Over the last 18 months, the Project has been successfully implemented eleven times. The sites that were part of this first phase represented a cross-section of public, private, and parochial junior and senior high schools as well as of several types of community-based organizations. Geographically speaking, Project "Open Horizons" has been run in Buffalo and in the City of Niagara Falls, New York. Future plans call for expansion of the Project into Lockport, Rochester, Syracuse, and New York City. Concomitant with the expansion of the Project into these cities will be the development of slide-tape biographies of people who are recognizable minority personalities in these communities.

Demographic and Classification Characteristics of the Project Participants (Groups 1-9)

As part of the research and evaluation study, vital descriptive information was collected on the 112 participants comprising project groups one through nine. The variables measured were the sex, age, race, education and birth-order of the respondent as well as the relationship, education, and occupation of the female and/or male adult guardians. From the guardian information could be derived the social class status of the female, the social class status of the male, and the type of household, whether one versus two heads of household.

Table 1

Implementation of Project "Open Horizons" Phase I: Sites, Location, and Clusters of Participants Completing the Project

	PROJECT SITE	LOCATION	CLUSTERS OF PARTICIPANTS COMPLETING THE PROJECT
1.	Futures Academy	Buffalo	9
2.	Kensington High School	Buffalo	9
3.	Kensington High School	Buffalo	14
4.	Upward Bound	Buffalo	12
5.	Lafayette High School	Buffalo	13
6.	Bennett High School	Buffalo	18
7.	Mt. St. Joseph's School	Buffalo	18
8.	North-end	Niagara Falls	7
9.	YMCA	Niagara Falls	12
10.	Boys Club	Niagara Falls	12
11.	South Junior High School	Niagara Falls	8
			132[1]

[1] It is important to note that of these 132 participants, 27 were white. Wherever a given cluster naturally included white youth, they were encouraged to participate in the project in as much as many career development issues are the same for all youth. The inclusion of 22 whites in the experimental sample for the research and evaluation study provided both a means for black-white data comparisons as well as a way to assess how white youth would react to a workshop that was designed for minority youth.

To preserve the confidentiality of any one participant's responses, the data were treated on an aggregate basis and only broken down by using selected demographic variables themselves.

Table 2 presents the results obtained from the summary procedures conducted on the demographic and classification variables.

- Insert Table 2 -

This table indicates that:

- The sample is rather evenly split between males and females in both the black and the white subsamples. The black subsample numbers 82 and the white subsample, 22.[1]
- The project touched individuals in the age range of 13 to 19. Approximately one-third of the sample was 15, also the modal age. The average age of the participants was 15.836.
- The project involved eighth to eleventh grade participants with approximately 36% of them being in the 9th grade.
- Approximately 57% of the sample lived in households with two adult guardians while 43% of the sample lived in one adult guardian households. In either case, almost all participants were living with their fathers and/or mothers.
- The social class status of the household as measured by the mother's status resulted in 69% of the sample yielding from the lower social strata, classes IV and V. On the other hand, measuring social class status using the male guardian's indices shows a slight shift upward but still 59% of the sample is in the lower social classes.
- Approximately one-third of the total sample are first borns.

The crosstabulation and Chi-square search for race and gender differences on all remaining demographic and classification variables did not reveal any significant differences. Therefore, in demographic terms, the male and the female subsamples as well as the black and the white subsamples were empirically the same.

[1]The experimental sample ranged in number from 104 to 112 depending on the partitioning of the total sample and missing data.

Table 2

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Comparisons of the Black and White, Male and Female Subpopulations on the Demographic and Classification Variables

VARIABLE	PERCENTAGES (%)					n_s	N
	Black	White	Male	Female	Total		
GENDER							
Male	46.3	40.9	-	-	44.1	49	
Female	53.7	59.1	-	-	55.9	62	111
RACE							
White	-	-	-	-	21.2	22	
Black	-	-	-	-	78.8	82	104
AGE ($\bar{X}$=1 s.e.s)							
13 and 14	11.0	28.6	16.3	14.8	15.5	17	
15	30.5	28.6	26.5	32.8	30.0	33	
16	20.7	23.7	22.4	21.3	21.8	24	
17	23.2	14.3	24.5	18.0	20.9	23	
18 and 19	14.6	4.3	10.3	13.1	11.8	13	110
EDUCATION							
8th Grade	19.4	23.8	30.2	10.7	19.2	19	
9th Grade	29.2	47.6	23.3	46.4	36.4	36	
0th Grade	23.6	14.3	27.9	16.1	21.2	21	
1th Grade	27.8	14.3	18.6	26.8	23.2	23	99
HEAD OF HOUSEHOLD							
One person	45.1	31.8	51.0	37.1	43.2	48	
Two people	54.9	68.2	49.0	62.9	56.8	63	111
FEMALE GUARDIAN'S RELATIONSHIP TO RESPONDENT							
Incipient	-	-	-	-	91.7	100	
Extended	-	-	-	-	7.3	8	
Augmented	-	-	-	-	1.0	1	109

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VARIABLE	PERCENTAGES (%)					n_s	N
EDUCATION OF FEMALE GUARDIAN	Black	White	Male	Female	Total		
7 to 11 years	6.3	12.5	10.3	10.4	10.3	9	
H.S. Graduate	42.2	50.0	46.2	41.7	43.7	38	
13 to 15 years	21.8	12.5	23.1	14.6	18.4	16	
College Graduate	29.7	25.0	20.5	33.3	27.6	24	87
OCCUPATION OF FEMALE GUARDIAN							
Skilled plus	46.8	15.3	44.1	42.3	43.1	34	
Semi-skilled	29.0	38.5	23.5	33.3	29.1	23	
Unskilled	24.2	46.2	32.4	24.4	27.8	22	79
SOCIAL CLASS STATUS OF FEMALE GUARDIAN							
Class III up	36.3	9.1	33.3	30.0	31.4	22	
Class IV	36.4	54.5	33.3	45.0	40.0	28	
Class V	27.3	36.4	33.3	25.0	28.6	20	70
MALE GUARDIAN'S RELATIONSHIP TO RESPONDENT							
Incipient	-	-	-	-	95.5	63	
Extended					4.5	3	
Augmented					-	-	66
EDUCATION OF MALE GUARDIAN							
7 to 11 years	-	-	-	-	-	-	
H.S. Graduate	52.9	50.0	52.6	48.4	50.0	25	
13 to 15 years	17.7	14.3	21.1	12.9	16.0	8	
College Graduate	29.4	35.7	26.3	38.7	34.0	17	5

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VARIABLE	PERCENTAGES (%)					n_s	N
OCCUPATION OF MALE GUARDIAN							
Skilled plus	47.4	62.4	55.6	52.6	53.6	30	
Semi-skilled	36.8	31.3	44.4	29.0	33.9	19	
Unskilled	15.8	6.3	-	18.4	12.5	7	56
SOCIAL CLASS STATUS OF MALE GUARDIAN							
Class III up	35.5	42.8	46.7	37.4	40.4	19	
Class IV	51.6	42.9	53.3	43.8	46.8	22	
Class V	12.9	14.3	-	18.8	12.8	6	47
BIRTHORDER							
Only child	11.0	4.5	8.2	14.5	12.5	14	
First Born	24.4	50.0	28.6	32.3	30.4	34	
Second Born	14.6	-	12.2	11.3	11.6	13	
Third Born	14.6	22.7	14.3	16.1	15.2	17	
Fourth-Fifth Born	17.1	18.3	18.4	14.5	16.1	18	
Sixth Up	18.3	4.5	18.3	11.3	14.3	16	112

Career Information Seeking Behavior

One of the goals of the project was to increase the career information seeking behavior of the participants. To measure how well the project met this goal, the Career Information Seeking Behavior Checklist was administered both on a pre- and a post-test basis. As it was used here, the Checklist was composed of ten (10) items that explored in tandem the occurrence and frequency of five types of information-seeking behaviors. These behaviors included: (1) writing away for information about careers, (2) reading about careers, (3) talking to friends and family members about careers, (4) visiting colleges and potential work sites, and (5) seeing guidance counselors about possible careers. The respondent was asked how frequently instances of these behaviors had occurred within a specific time frame. During pre-testing, the time frame was the six months prior to the start of the project while during post follow-up testing, the time frame was the one month between session three and session four. For convenience, the major results pertaining to career information seeking behavior in the total, the black, and the white subsamples follow:

The Total Sample:

- Career information-seeking during the six months prior to coming into the project was minimal at best and very limited in scope. Of the five behaviors examined, participants reported reading about careers three times in the last six months and talking to others about careers twice.

- Career information seeking behavior operated independently of most variables and was related only to age, gender and grade level. In general, these results indicated that being older and in a higher grade led to more and wider kinds of information-seeking. Females tended to do significantly more writing away for information than males. Still, the activity was minimal.

- On post follow-up testing, the data indicated that the Project significantly increased the percentage of people who reported engaging in information-seeking behaviors, although the major help-seeking pattern remained essentially the same involving reading and talking behaviors.

- The Project also increased the frequency of career information-seeking behavior over pre-test levels. These findings are most

important because it means the Project was able to get more people to do more information seeking in one month than they had done in the six months prior to coming into the Project.

The Black Sample:

- In every instance, the percentage of people saying they had engaged in a particular information-seeking behavior was higher than for the total sample.
- The information-seeking pattern for blacks was greater in scope than that of the total sample including seeing counselors as well as reading and talking to others about careers.
- On post follow-up testing, the data indicated that the Project did increase both the percentage of black people engaged in information-seeking and the frequency of information-seeking over pre-test levels.
- The Project was especially impactful on black females. It significantly increased the scope of information-seeking from two behaviors to four behaviors. The Project also increased the frequency of information-seeking to such an extent that on post-testing female frequencies exceeded all male frequencies when on pre-testing the male frequencies of occurrence had exceeded most of the female frequencies reported.

The White Sample:

- The majority of the white sample had engaged in only one type of information-seeking behavior - i.e. reading about careers and even here the figure is low at 58%.
- In four of the five behaviors, the mean frequencies of occurrence fell below the corresponding figures for the total group. The white sample had engaged in much less information-seeking.
- On follow-up, the pattern of information-seeking for the white sample shifted rather than expanded. However, the percentage of people engaged in talking as opposed to reading increased to 73% from 58%.
- The Project was successful in increasing the percentage of people engaging in three out of five behaviors examined. In addition, the Project led to frequencies of occurrence for writing and talking behaviors that increased over their pre-test levels.

Participant Evaluation of the Project

Another very important goal of the project was to evaluate how participants saw the project along several dimensions. To meet that goal, the Participant Project Evaluation Form (PPEF) was administered to all enrollees at the end of session three during post immediate testing. The PPEF was a 13 item measure devised for this study that examined: (1) identification with the

role-models, (2) the perceived characteristics of the role-models, (3) receipt of the workshop message, (4) role-model attitude, (5) group climate, (6) professionalism of workshop leaders, (7) the provision of useful career information, (8) recommended improvements to project components, (9) the personal endorsement of the participant, and (10) perceived effectiveness of the workshop components.

The analysis of the data from the Participant Project Evaluation Form clearly indicated that the overwhelming majority of all participants viewed the project in a very positive light and that they took from it the achievement-oriented ideology it expounded. More specifically, the data indicated that:

- The role-models were seen exactly as intended. They were seen as attractive (72%), as prestigeful (81%), as pillars of the community (88%), as satisfied with their current positions (94%), as making "good" money (97%), and as hardworking (100%). The role-models were very effective in the slide-tape biographies as well as in the groups where they displayed an attitude and created group atmospheres that were highly facilitative of personal exploration and growth.

- The group leaders were perceived as fulfilling their role in the project. They were seen as prepared and organized (95%), as providing useful career information (93%), and as addressing all inquiries either directly or through referral (95%).

- Close to 95% of the total sample were pleased enough with the Project to give it their personal recommendation.

While there was a high degree of unanimity in the total sample about most aspects of the project, there were some statistically significant and predictable race effects seen on the key aspects of identification with the role-model and receipt of the Project message. These results were as follows:

- While 72% of the total sample answered "Yes" to being able to see themselves being like the role-models, significantly more black (74%) than white (56%) respondents indicated their identification in this way.

- In another measure of identification, significantly more black (74%) than white (38%) females could see the role-models as having been like themselves at one point in time.

- Significant race effects were evident in the finding that more black (70%) than white (38%) respondents were rated as having discerned the full Project message.

Clearly, these results indicate that identification with the role-model and receipt of the workshop message are linked to the perceived characteristics of the sender. These data document the fact that this dynamic operates in reverse just as we have known it operates in the normal scheme of things.

With respect to the total sample's evaluation of the three project components, the following findings are worthy of note:

- Generally, the whole sample was satisfied with the slide-tape biographies and that if anything, more time could be devoted to them.
- In the case of the rap sessions, the simple majority of project participants were satisfied with them as is, but close to 37% felt more time should be devoted to this component.
- With regard to the manual, there were mixed feelings. It seems as if a serious reconsideration of the manual is necessary to bring it up to standard with the other two components. Based on these data, the manual has been placed under total review.

Data Reports to Come

There is still a great deal of data associated with Project "Open Horizons" that remains to be analyzed and reported out. These data address more of the theoretical issues involved in career development such as the psychological vista of career choice, locus of control and degree of career maturation. Instruments measuring these areas were administered at pre-testing (before session one), at post-immediate testing (after session three), and at post follow-up testing (30 days later after session four). Among other things, future reports will be able to tell us where all participants stood on these measures coming into the Project and what demonstrable impact, if any, the Project made in these respects both immediately after the workshop ended and 30 days later. It is this data which will begin to build our minority career development data base and which will allow us to evaluate the goals not addressed in this report.

Project Limitations

In closing, there were three limitations associated with the research and

evaluation study conducted on Project "Open Horizons". In placing the above results into context, these limitations should be kept in mind. One limitation concerns the high number of tests run at a single alpha level which may have led to some Type I errors. Because of this, any significant results may be interpreted cautiously until replicated. The second limitation is the small number of responses that occurred in some categories due to missing data and the partitioning of the sample. Tests with categories like these should be interpreted cautiously as well because the poser of such tests has been diminished. Finally, the study was limited in some of its comparisons and breakdowns by the small number of whites in the sample. Future studies should make a definite attempt to include a larger number of white participants.